

ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR LUTHER H. HODGES
OF NORTH CAROLINA
ON STATE-WIDE RADIO-TELEVISION NETWORK

10:00 p.m., Monday, August 8, 1955

Fellow Citizens:

Tonight I want to discuss with you - the people of North Carolina - that subject which is uppermost in the minds of all of us -- our public schools and segregation. North Carolina stands now at the crossroads! Our choice of which road we shall follow will involve all that has been accomplished in the past through the determined efforts of our forefathers to provide us with a good system of public schools; it will also involve the future of our children - and our children's children. Make no mistake here! Let there be no misunderstanding! We hold in our minds and hearts the past, the present and the future of our beloved State. I urge, therefore, that you consider what I say to you tonight with full realization of the consequences of your decisions.

In order that we can approach our subject in a proper context - that is, with an understanding of what has happened in the past, I would like to take time to review for you briefly some of the background of education in North Carolina.

Like all the Southern States, North Carolina was dealt a crushing blow by the War Between the States. In the words of a distinguished historian: "North Carolina entered upon the period with her public assets dissipated, her industries destroyed, her railroads wrecked, her educational institutions closed, her public debt piled up in crushing proportions, and with a political problem that for two generations absorbed those energies that should have been left free to develop economic, social, and intellectual resources of the State." In 1866, the General Assembly closed the doors of the common schools which had survived the stresses and strains of the War. It succumbed to the fear of poverty, the fear of taxes, and, above all, to the fear of mixed schools for white and Negro children.

The Constitution of 1868 required the General Assembly to provide for a system of public schools with a minimum term of four months each year and